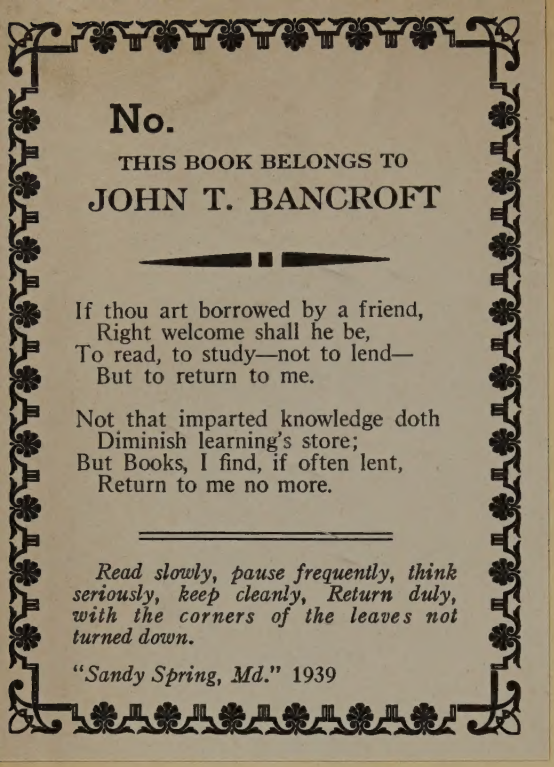

No.

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

JOHN T. BANCROFT

If thou art borrowed by a friend,
Right welcome shall he be,
To read, to study—not to lend—
But to return to me.

Not that imparted knowledge doth
Diminish learning's store;
But Books, I find, if often lent,
Return to me no more.

*Read slowly, pause frequently, think seriously, keep cleanly, Return duly, with the corners of the leaves not turned down.*

*"Sandy Spring, Md."* 1939

27.5
803

Scarce - Distribution limited to members of the Japan Society. Ledoux was a major collector of Japanese woodblock prints.

# THE ART OF JAPAN

*Wave Screen by Korin*
Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York

# The Art of Japan

BY

LOUIS V. LEDOUX

*New York*
JAPAN SOCIETY, INC.
1927

*Cover Design: Tennin with Biwa, Wood Carving of the Seventh Century from Horyuji. Imperial Museum, Nara.*

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1927

TO

HOWARD MANSFIELD

WHO WAS AMONG THE FIRST IN

NEW YORK TO LOVE AND UNDERSTAND

THE ART OF JAPAN

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# The Art of Japan

It is not the purpose of the Japan Society to present its members with a formal history of Japanese art or even a formal essay, technical and burdened with names; the Committee having the matter in charge desires merely a brief statement of what the art of Japan has been and is, a simple description of its distinctive gifts of beauty to the world.

In Paris a group of distinguished men, fast aging now, many of whom have been known as authorities on the arts of other lands, have dined together on one evening of each month for over forty years, and after dinner the bare, almost squalid room of the café where these "Friends of Japanese Art" are wont to meet, is transformed as out of packages and pockets emerge objects which have brought to their finders that release from the prisoning troubles of life which is the gift of art—objects that are passed down the long table as reverently and lovingly as they would have been handled above the clean straw mats of a

tea-ceremony room in the land from which they came. In Boston there have been for years many who could have entered happily into that group, men and women who felt long ago those distinctive and endearing qualities in the art of Japan that make it prized and loved; but in New York, where there has been comparatively little opportunity to see it, a corresponding ignorance has lingered. There has even been a prejudice against it, based partly on this same ignorance, partly on the oft-repeated falsehood that Japanese art is entirely derivative, and partly on a peculiar feeling among local devotées of Chinese painting, many more examples of which have been seen in New York, that to praise anything Japanese would be both disloyal and stupid.

At the very outset it should be stated quite clearly that the debt of Japan to China is incalculable, as great as that of England or America to Continental Europe, and that, so far as can be judged from extant examples and copies of copies, the finest Chinese paintings of a thousand years ago achieved a height of sublimity to which the corresponding works of the Japanese never quite attained. Sublimity is one of the greatest qualities in art as in life; but most of us cannot always be reading Milton, and the elements in Japanese art that make it dear are char-

acteristically Japanese. The art of Japan has a humanity about it, an appealing sweetness and light, a sobriety and perfect refinement of taste, an extraordinary decorative quality, a sense of humor that make it a distinctive expression of the race by which it has been produced; and many phases of it either have no continental antecedents whatever or have been developed so far beyond them as to have become wholly national. Certain varieties of Japanese art, particularly Zen ink-paintings, of which more will be said later, were direct copies of Chinese, others were not; but it would be as foolish to deride the art of Japan in its entirety on the ground of derivativeness as it would be to refrain from reading an Elizabethan play because the English drama was preceded by the Roman and the author took his plot from an Italian novel. The course of art is long; its interactions are intricate. There has been no nation on earth without antecedents. The Renaissance was a rebirth — an attempt to do what Greece had done; it came first to Italy, later to England; American sculptors are conscious of Praxiteles and Michael Angelo, American painters of a long tradition. As a matter of fact art comes of necessity to islands from a neighboring continent, to new lands from lands that are older; it is what the island race, the younger nation does with

its inheritance that counts. And so it is with much that is Japanese. If sources must be considered the art of Japan should be judged as the art of England or America would be; or the art of continental Europe against the background of Greece.

Before leaving the subject let me repeat: Many phases of Japanese art were originally derived from China or Korea; some are direct copies; others are wholly distinctive, either having no prototypes in the older lands or being developed beyond them as the Elizabethan drama was developed beyond that of Rome. Among the artistic products of Japan that can be counted as thoroughly Japanese are prints, metal work, lacquer, the theatre, domestic and Shinto architecture and most of those varieties of sculpture and painting which are not primarily of religious significance. In most of the other arts there are distinguishing traits that differentiate work done in Japan from anything Chinese or Korean.

Except for their exquisite refinement of taste, perhaps the most distinctive gift of beauty in the Japanese is in their sense of decoration. From the lowest to the highest they have always had it. Once it came into flower as a major art in the paintings of the Korin School, which are decorative even to a degree beyond the great decorations of the later Kano mas-

ters; and at this same time Korin and his brother craftsmen were applying to lacquer and to pottery such decoration as had never been in the world before. Even today the decorative effect is omnipresent, unerring, in the palaces of the nobles, the streets, the shops, the cottages of peasants. It is no wonder that artists like John LaFarge and Ralph Adams Cram grew ecstatic when even the layman sees it with his unobservant eyes. If he walks, let us say, from the door of his hillside hotel in Kyoto to the right, past Nanzenji and down by Kurodani, he is thrilled by it; if he turns to the left to wander past Chion-in, under the great cherry tree and on by alleys of poverty to Kiyomidzu, it is everywhere about him—in the fences, the gates, the doors, the flowers seen through open shoji, the ways walls are laid, the little gardens. If he goes farther off to a great garden like that of the Katsura Palace it is the same—a perfect sense of decorative values expressed in perfect craftsmanship with perfect taste. This is a distinctive trait of the Japanese, that with true feeling for form and proportion and fitness, marks all their artistic production. But what were the beginnings of art in Japan?

When Buddhism came from the mainland in the year 552 of our chronology—a thousand years after

the birth of Gautama Buddha, and transformed by its slow journey from India through China and Korea, it found a nation of artists that only needed the great spiritual impetus it gave to become articulate, creative. Of pre-Buddhist art in Japan there are few records and practically no survivals; but it is abundantly evident that the seed fell on prepared ground. Skilled craftsmen, particularly builders and sculptors, were imported at first from Korea; the more grandiose varieties of temple architecture necessitated by Buddhist ritual, as distinguished from the simplicity of the Shinto cult, were copied from contemporary Chinese styles, which in their turn had felt the permeating influence of Buddhism; and in an incredibly short time, the major and the minor arts were being widely practiced by native workmen. Buddhism exerted as strong an influence on the art of Shinto Japan and Confucian or Taoist China as Christianity did on the arts of Europe; but with this difference, that back of China and Japan there was nothing comparable to Greece.

The records of pre-Buddhist painting in India are practically a blank, though the technical mastery of the Ajanta frescoes and other early paintings in the country of Gautama show a highly developed tradition of craftsmanship. In China there are refer-

ences of doubtful authenticity to painting at a very early age, but what is supposed to be the oldest surviving example may after all be a later transcription from a lost original of the 4th Century A.D. If recent theories are correct, many of the designs on the earliest bronzes of China came by way of Scythia, and the finding of Chinese jade in the ruins of Troy gives striking evidence of how influences and interactions could have followed the far-flung trade routes of very early times. Traces of Persian and Sassanian design are clear both in China and Japan; and at least some of the earliest Indian sculpture that survives is of a Greco-Roman or late Greek, Alexandrian type, the influence of which is apparent in certain phases of Chinese sculpture. The springs of the river of art often are hidden, the continuity of the stream remains; but each country through which it passes gives it new characteristics.

Asian art when it reached Japan from China and Korea received that refinement and sobriety of taste, that inimitable sense of decoration of which mention already has been made and took on, in some or many of its forms, a delightful humor, an appreciation of the ridiculous, a playful scorn of solemn hypocrisies; it learned to recognize the body as well as the soul, the limits as well as the aspirations of humanity. For

the first time, it saw life clearly and saw it whole; a tendency to over-emphasize sublimity was corrected by humor. Generalizations are difficult and dangerous, but if Indian art is primarily luxuriant, complicated, apt to degenerate into the grotesque; and Chinese art is above all else solemn, moralizing, didactic, in sculpture placid, in painting a constant flight for the sublime that sometimes falls into the marshes of sentimentalism; Japanese art is in the main exquisite, broadly appreciative of depths and heights, decorative, human and refined. It has a feeling for nature all its own, delights in the beauty of little things as well as in the grandeur of great spaces and the absorption of the human spirit into the rhythm of the Universe. Its faults are tendencies toward triviality and stylization, a lack of staidness that brings it down too often from the heights to play about incognito in places where it should not be. The Japanese are younger in spirit than the Chinese, less fatalistic; not so consistently serious. Their art has moments of equal exaltation but more frequently than that of China is content to enjoy and to express the world that is.

Where Japanese painting most closely resembles Chinese and has taken the most from it, is in a peculiar and very noble type of religious landscape that

was the product of a special phase of Buddhism which, when it came to Japan was developed by the Japanese along somewhat new lines under the name of Zen. In Japan this variety of Buddhism with its insistence upon quiet contemplation became, as it had somewhat differently in China, a cult of the aesthetic, and found expression in tea-ceremony and flower arrangement, as well as in paintings of deep spiritual significance done solely in ink. When the average person thinks of Chinese painting, it is landscapes done under this religious impulse that he has in mind, and Zen painting in Japan flowered from the same seed, true to type and copying its methods and its modes of expression from the masterpieces of the older land. The differences between Japanese and Chinese Zen painting are no greater than those between English and French Gothic, and the copying is very close; but the Chinese, who led the way to these heights of spiritual abstraction, reached summits to which the Japanese following in their footsteps seldom, if ever, attained.

Except in the period when Zen thought and the school of painting that was intent on expressing it was predominant, Japanese art is characterized and distinguished from the art of the Asian continent by that humorous appreciation of values which is a

constant trait of the Island race and already has been mentioned. As a nation, the Japanese have consistently refused to take life too seriously; they have enjoyed finding and depicting in painting and literature the incongruous elements in it; and they have taken particular pleasure in burlesquing whatever has seemed to them either hypocritical or ponderously solemn. In Japan a palace in which two or three family murders had been committed could not have continued to be called "The Abode of Perpetual Peace." The Japanese would have felt the incongruity in such a name as well as its grandiloquence and would have changed it. This is a touch of nature that should make them seem akin to ourselves unless the spirit of Yankee humor already is broken by the strain of life as we have chosen to live it, or is lost in the enveloping gloom of our Central European Semitic elements.

Although the Japanese in various periods have revered all things Chinese, as our Middle Ages did Aristotle, or the Renaissance all that was classic, they have ever been inquiring, incredulous, alert — in personality the Greeks of Asia, comparing with their continental neighbors as the citizens of Periclean Athens did with the Romans of the Republican times, or as a Parisian compares with the burgher of

Amsterdam or Berlin—less solid and soulful, more brilliant, a great deal more entertaining. The charm and individuality of the Japanese people expressed in their art have won for it an affection that differs from intellectual or aesthetic appreciation.

It is necessary to dwell at some length and even with repetition on certain characteristics of the Japanese, for the art of a nation inevitably expresses racial character, in Japan as in Greece or Rome, in China, in Italy or Flanders; and one further trait must be mentioned. There is a code of knightly honor, called "Bushido," which has been at once an expression of the Japanese nature and a profound influence on it. This code insists on loyalty, bravery, devotion to duty, uncomplaining acceptance of the blows of fortune. It is purely a Japanese code, and yet with due allowance for all the inevitable differences of race and custom, its ideal is startlingly close to the Anglo-Saxon conception of conduct becoming a gentleman. Women as well as men were bound by it; for woman in Japan has been more the helpmate of man than his chattel or his slave. The Japanese mediaeval romances, such as the Oguri Hangwan, or the story of Yoshitsune, are in their tales of knightly prowess and devotion to an ideal, very like our stories of Amadis of Gaul or the Knights of the Round

Table; but always with this difference: In Europe the Mariolatry of the Middle Ages placed Woman on an altar to be protected and worshipped; in Japan she faced the realities of life with and for her lord. It is this that has made the women of Japan what they are—creatures of exquisite refinement and sensibility, self-effacing in ordinary circumstances, apparently frail, yet capable of rising nobly to emergencies, of bearing nobly unexpected strokes of fate.

Some knowledge of the racial character they reflect is essential to a comprehension of the arts of Japan; and after this all too brief discussion of the national qualities that make them what they are, we can turn to description of the arts themselves, commencing with painting—that one of them to which most frequent reference happens to have been made in these introductory remarks.

## Painting

The gods of a people embody the ideals of their worshippers, and shortly after the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, the Saints and the Divinities of that religion began to take on characteristics that were distinctively Japanese. This is especially true of Jizō, that most lovable of Eastern gods, who before he had wandered very long amid the sea mists and over the hillsides of his new-found island home, was quite different from his prototype Titsang who had come from China, and would scarcely have recognized, even as of his kin, the Shitagaba who had started from India long before. At first, Buddhist painting followed closely continental models as these came to Japan either in Chinese works of the Tang Dynasty or their Korean equivalents; but soon, as time is counted in the East, two of the great subjects of Japanese Buddhist painting—the Descent and the Rising of Amida—which are well-nigh as recurrent as Annunciations in Christian painting, were first imagined and depicted, if tradition may be believed, by a priest named Eshin Sozu, a painter of great spiritual power and considerable technical achievement. The calm rising of Amida, like a great golden sun between curving and shadowy

hills, is one of the most magnificent conceptions in Eastern art; the Descent in which Amida floats downward in merciful welcome to souls ascending from the world of pain, has that tenderness and humanity which already have been noted as characteristic contributions of the Japanese. Of two examples of the rising of Amida, both attributed to Eshin Sozu and both preserved now in the Kyoto Museum, one is far finer than the other. The great Descent, thought to be by that artist, and the original of the subject, is kept on the Holy Mountain, Koyasan. These pictures give conclusive evidence of the height to which Japanese painting had attained by the 10th Century, as well as of the superb imaginative originality of at least one early artist.

Members of the two leading schools of Buddhist figure painting, the Takuma and Kosé schools, which in the beginning were strongly influenced by Tang, or possibly Indian models, occasionally tried their hands at landscape with notable effect, as in the famous waterfall attributed to a half-fabulous painter of the 9th Century, Kosé Kanaoka, which is now with many another treasure in the Nezu collection of Tokio. But what is more important to the present resumé is the commencement of that purely Japanese school, called Tosa, which reached its high-

est development in the 11th and 12th centuries of our chronology, before the coming of Zen with its insistence on the eternal rather than the temporal, brought a change equivalent in extent, though not in direction, to that which Protestantism brought to the art of certain European countries. Tosa painting has continued as a very important and distinctively Japanese school even to the present time. Generalization is hazardous, but for the purposes of such an essay as this it is fairly safe to say that the subjects of Tosa painting usually are drawn from scenes of earthly legend, or of daily experience, the life of the court, the priestly class or the people; flowers are painted as living ephemeral flowers not as manifestations of the eternal; the good and evil of the world we know are depicted as we know them, with consciousness of something beyond but no insistence on it, and frequently with humor. If there is anything back of Tosa painting that is not purely Japanese it is the far influence of Persia come at last to the Island Empire after its long journey across Asia, so many traces of which remain. Notable examples of early Tosa painting may be seen in America in the so-called "Keion" scroll at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Tenjin scrolls at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

A little later, when the influence of Zen became so powerful as to make painting what it had been in China under the similar form of Buddhism, merely the handmaid of religion; when rulers retired at the height of their power to give themselves to Zen thought and Zen art, painters went to China to study the religious landscape of that land and came back so filled with enthusiasm for the masterpieces they saw, copied, and acquired, that their own paintings took on Chinese forms. The mountains of the Yangtze gorges were depicted in Japan; Chinese scenes, Chinese legends became the fashion. The external qualities of the Japanese ink-landscapes of this period are Chinese, the internal are in the main, as they were in China, the result of a special variety of Buddhism. It is probable that the very greatest masterpieces of this type were Chinese and were never quite equalled by those to whom the inspiration came later, but Shiubun, Soami, Soga Jasoku and other Zen artists of the 15th Century were undeniably great painters of authentic inspiration; and their works stand today among the notable masterpieces of the world. In this school Japanese painting reached its loftiest spiritual heights and in this it most closely resembles and copies Chinese.

The next important school, the Kano, counts

among its early masters Motonobu (1476–1559), the second of the Kano line and one of the greatest painters that Japan has yet produced. The first Kano pictures, which were largely in ink and of landscape or nature subjects, are not always easy to distinguish from the works of the Zen masters; they are almost equally Chinese in manner but of different spiritual content. In the beginning certain technical methods, such as the way of drawing rocks, were taken directly from the Southern Sung masters, while other similarities are due to the general characteristics of the main stream of Asian art in which landscape is more imaginative and suggestive than our own. It so happened, however, that after about three generations of Kano painting, political and social conditions made quiet aestheticism and spirituality less practicable than they had been at the time of the early Zen artists and created a demand for the decoration of vast palace interiors, rooms to be made gorgeous with gold and colors. Such possibilities were latent in the Kano style; and successive masters developed them to effects of decorative richness unrivalled in any other country of the world. One must go to Japan to see them except in fragments or small-scale reproductions, for those that remain are chiefly in the temples and palaces about Kyoto. The effect is one of inde-

scribable richness, but the lavishness of color and detail is made subservient to that unfailing sense of decorative value, of form and design the Japanese have.

Almost contemporary with the early Kano painters were the beginnings of the school called after Korin, though not founded by him. In this the Japanese sense of decoration reached its climax. It is distinctively Japanese; it had no prototype in China and nothing like it has been produced elsewhere. Stylized to a degree unusual in a vital art, the paintings of this school, whether on screens or panels or mounted as kakemono to be unrolled and hung, are marvels of decorative effectiveness in spacing as in color; and in the works of the masters are marvels of technical facility as well. In some ways an outgrowth of the old Tosa, purely Japanese school, in others a spontaneous flowering of genius in blossoms wholly new, these paintings yet have behind them the age old inherited ability in brush strokes necessitated by silk and absorbent paper—such manual control as the Occident never has approached. The older masters of the ink-paintings by deft turnings of the brush would draw in rich gradations of tone a stalk of bamboo or a broken tree-trunk at a single stroke; Korin, with one application of his brush, would place perfectly a

leaf of iris and make it live. Painting in the Far East is close to calligraphy and Koyetsu (1557–1637), the founder of the Korin school, more certainly survives in beautiful writing and in lacquer with his distinctive qualities of decoration in its applied designs, than in paintings that can be proved to be from his brush. Of the work of his immediate great followers — Sotatsu, Korin, Kenzan, to whom the later Hoitsu and Rochu might well be added, there are many examples of certain authenticity as well as many that are doubtful. Most are in Japan, for the Japanese, except in one brief period when Paris and Boston acquired all they could get, have guarded jealously their greater works of art; and many may now be seen there in temples and museums and through the unrivalled courtesy of the owners of great private collections, even though the larger part of the collection of Mr. Beppu of Tokyo, who was especially rich in the works of this school, must be counted now as among the most lamented and irreparable losses caused by the recent earthquake. No phase of Japanese painting can be studied adequately outside of Japan, but the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has been fortunate enough to acquire since the earthquake a two-fold wave screen by Korin which is beyond question one of

the greatest works of this type that has ever been permitted to leave Japan. This screen, formerly owned by Mr. Beppu, by rare good fortune was not in Tokyo at the time of the disaster, and occasional half hours in quiet contemplation of it are earnestly recommended. At the same time, it would be well to observe a Jizō of the Kamakura period (1186–1332) which is a notable example of early Buddhist figure painting and is displayed in the same room, as well as the Tosa scroll to which reference already has been made, even though this last is not quite in the class with the "Keion" scroll in the Museum of Fine Arts. In Boston there is a fine six-fold wave screen attributed to Korin, but in a different, tighter manner; and the Freer Gallery in Washington has one similar in style and subject to the Boston screen but attributed to Sotatsu. Both these screens are very effective but neither one compares—at least in the mind of the present writer—as a work of art or an example of the Korin school, with the wave screen at the Metropolitan. To distinguish the styles of two contemporary masters, it is necessary to compare authentic works of each and this can be done only in Japan where, for example, one may see screens representing the wind and thunder gods by Sotatsu and by Korin—the one at the Kyoto Imperial Museum, the other in

the collection of Count S. Tokugawa—and may observe how each of these masters transcribed a subject derived from a pair of statues by Unkei, an early sculptor, which are preserved in one of the Kyoto temples. Kenzan is represented by at least one notable example in the Freer Gallery and other interesting works of this school may be seen in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, whose collection of Japanese paintings is the most important as well as the largest outside of Japan. There are certain other examples of considerable distinction in private collections of New York and Chicago, but nothing comparable with the wave screen at the Metropolitan.

It may be said in passing that the Department of Far Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum has been developed during the past twelve years under the expert and careful leadership of its Curator, Mr. S. C. Bosch Reitz, into the place of real achievement and even greater promise, that it now is. Notable works of Chinese and Cambodian as well as of Japanese art have been acquired, until New York is no longer provincial in this respect as compared with Boston, Paris or London; and the attention of members of the Japan Society is specifically directed not only to the actual works of Oriental art that are there, but to the invaluable series of reproductions in the

study rooms and in the Museum library as well.

In the latter half of the 17th Century seeds that had lain practically dormant in the old Tosa garden burst suddenly into flower, and a school was formed to choose its subjects from the daily life of the people in the gay new Tokugawa capital. Most of the artists of this school made designs for prints — engravings in color from wood blocks — as well as paintings, and it is the Japanese color print that came like a revelation to Whistler, Manet and others, has been most influential in the Occident, and is the best known here of any form of Japanese art. Scorned until recently in Japan, because they were made by and for the people of the middle classes and represented merely the joys and sorrows of this fleeting world, prints made an immediate, irresistible appeal to Europe and America. They are distinctively Japanese in scope and feeling, they have the humor, gaiety, the charm of Japan; they poke fun unblushingly at old solemnities, they show the young girls of the bourgeoisie, flower-like in their light-hearted pastimes, the courtezans and actors and merrymakers of a world that has gone, and they depict all this with a consummate mastery of form and line and color that was the heritage of a thousand years of technical achievement. Harunobu, Kiyonaga and Utamaro,

Hokusai and Hiroshige the landscapists, Sharaku the satirist—these are names familiar in the Occident, and at least the prints of these masters may be studied in the public as well as in the notable private collections of Europe and America. It must be borne in mind, however, that early impressions in good condition of the works of the masters should be seen, not those crude and decadent prints in garish color that were produced by copyists after 1850. The average late print of the cheap shops and poor auctions is not a work of art; those that are worthy to find place in important collections—such prints for example as were exhibited by the Japan Society in 1911 and by the Grolier Club of New York in 1923 and 1924, are the productions of genius and have in them much of the lighter side of the soul of Japan. This is the latest and the least important of the major schools of Japanese painting and yet it is by chance the best known in the West. It is distinctively Japanese.

No mention has been made of Sesshiu, the great "Independent" (1420–1506); or of Maruyama Okio, the leader of the naturalistic painters of the 18th and 19th Centuries and a very notable artist, for we have attempted to compress the history of a thousand years into a few brief pages and must close this part of our synopsis at the death of Hiroshige in

1858, just at the period when America brought "civilization" to Japan. Adherents of all the schools are painting today, for in spite of the new commercialism the creative spirit has not died in this nation of artists; but mention of what is being done now can best be left for our final page.

## Sculpture

Except for clay figurines found in tombs, nothing survives of pre-Buddhist sculpture in Japan; but very shortly after the coming of Buddhism in the 6th Century the art reached a very high state of development both in wood and in bronze. There is a question whether two of the greatest and most generally admired sculptures of this early period were carved by Japanese or by Korean workmen imported to help in the building of the still-standing Horyuji Temple and to teach whatever of continental craftsmanship might be unknown on the Island; but whoever carved these statues—the Kwannon with the Vase and the Yumedono Kwannon, which now is thought to be Japanese—they are among the very noble and very beautiful religious sculptures of the world. Both are in wood with haloes. Nothing approaching them even remotely has been found in Korea, and although their draperies have the characteristics of the Chinese Wei period, they would be difficult to match in their slender, spiritual grace and noble proportions in China. Certain bronze statues of almost equal importance and undoubtedly Japanese, can be confidently attributed to a period only a few years later.

Sculpture in Japan in its great examples has been chiefly in wood and bronze and dry lacquer, the volcanic rock of the islands not being as suitable as was Chinese marble or granite for statues intended to endure. It is one of the great arts of Japan but even more than painting must be studied there, for almost all the finest statues sit as they have sat for ages in the great dim temples, with prayer and incense rising perpetually about them, or shut away in quiet halls of contemplation with no sound breaking upon their silence save the deep-toned bells of the hillsides and the occasional patter of children.

By the end of the 7th Century or the beginning of the 8th the delicacy of the early sculpture in wood and bronze with its sweetness and grace gave place to the majesty of a later type exemplified by the colossal black bronze trinity at Yakushiji. These black bronzes of Yakushiji have been described ecstatically by Fenollosa in his "Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art," Vol. 1 pp. 96–99, but his description can only be accepted in part, for the scholarship of today does not feel that Alexandrian Hellenism exerted as universal and as permeating an influence on the sculpture of China and Japan as Fenollosa thought. Ralph Adams Cram says of them: "As studies of line, pure and consummate, I know few things in

sculpture more nearly ultimate than these statues." Mr. Cram is more of an architect than a sculptor and more of an artist than a scholar, but he writes concisely and well and may be quoted further: "With the eighth century we come at a bound into an era of Japanese sculpture, national, ethnic, perfectly developed. The first formalism has worked itself out, traditions have been discounted so far as their accidents are concerned. Japan has found herself and announces that fact in perfectly audible phrases. . . . More or less portrait statues begin to appear in the shape of apotheosized warriors and incarnations of heroism and force, and here we come at once into a full-fledged school of vital sculpture. Figures such as those of A God of War and A Sculptured Guardian are the very embodiment of force, with power and ability in every line. Consider the poise and dash of such a splendid, sinewy thing as the Incarnation of War, the spring and sweep of the body, the tensity of nerve, the howling savagery of the distorted face conventionalized like a Greek mask; or again, the rigid alertness, the power, concentrated and controlled, in the armored figure. In all these the bodies are fully articulated, the faces, particularly the last, unmistakably portraits, yet portraits that are more than the effigies of individuals, they are amalgama-

tions of a race, manifestations of national character. Note also the superb armour, almost classical in its lines, without fantasticism or exaggeration, cleancut, splendid in line, noble in its surface. These are great statues, all of them, works of the highest art: . . . indeed I doubt if anything more full of individuality and character has ever been wrought than certain heads of the 8th Century in Japan."

It is likely that some of the statues of which Mr. Cram speaks in this passage are of a little later date than that which he assigns to them, and the amount of actual portraiture that is in them is doubtful. Most Japanese sculpture is primarily religious, or else carving of the rather ornate and frequently polychrome variety of the shrines at Nikko. There are, however, many extremely fine portraits of old priests; for the faces of the old are very wonderful in Japan, filled as they are with character and kindly humor, and sculptors have made the most of subjects that must have delighted them. Of the long line of individual artists no mention can be made. Jōchō was prominent among them, and a strange personality of the 12th Century—Unkei, who worked in wood rather than in bronze and who knew not the peace of Amida but carved tragic, terrible figures of the Judge of the Dead and those warrior guardians who ward off the

powers of evil. Japanese sculpture in wood is supreme both technically and in its spiritual expressiveness; the stone sculpture of Japan is negligible.

In the 13th Century came the great bronze Amida of Kamakura (the Daibutsu) which is one of the largest and, what is much more important, one of the most impressive statues in the world. Many colossal statues, including what is left of the great 8th Century bronze at Nara, seem over-grown, grandiose; in this one the size appears inevitable, a natural concomitant of the spiritual conception. The temple that sheltered the Daibutsu disappeared centuries ago, and Yoritomo's capital is now scarcely more than a fishing village over which the great Amida gazes tranquil, eternal, while cherry blossoms fall about him as the generations have drifted by, and at his feet new children play their age-old games. Beside him there are pine trees, behind, is a cleft in the circling hills; and as one looks, awed into silence, this sweet world of sense wherein we live like golden motes in the sunlight, seems to fall, impermanent as the cherry blossoms, through windless spaces of eternity. Homer never describes Helen, he describes the effect she produced on those who saw her; neither does one describe the Daibutsu; it is enough to say that the message of Amida to those who live in this world of

will was so deeply felt, so powerfully conveyed by the all but nameless sculptor that it may be not merely understood by those who stand before the statue today, but that the Daibutsu may speak to the soul as well, moving the spectator with that living, spiritual influence which only the greatest works of religious art have the power to exert. For those who are curious in such matters, it may be well to say that the statue is fifty feet high. Probably it is the perfect adjustment of its proportions that makes this Amida so effective; but when one is away from it, a question sometimes arises as to whether or not the effectiveness could have been as great indoors as now when the gray-green bronze is seen surrounded by trees and roofed only by the sky.

The best reproductions of Japanese religious sculpture are to be found in expensive and almost unobtainable books published in Japan, and as it would be unfair to refer American students to these, the second choice may be indicated. For the earliest work, "Japanese Sculpture of the Suiko Period," by Langdon Warner, is to be recommended, and for the general subject of religious sculpture up to the 8th Century, Karl With's "Buddhistiche Plastik in Japan." Unfortunately no book has as yet been published in Europe or America with fine reproductions of the

portrait-statues or much more than solitary examples, such as the Daibutsu, of any of the later work.

Comparatively recent Japanese sculpture is best known in the 17th Century polychrome carvings of the Nikko shrines with their amazing wealth and intricacy of design. These cannot be described here; but brief mention must be made of those adjuncts to the costume known as netsuké, which are in ivory, wood or other materials and have been widely collected in the Occident because of the delicacy and skill of their workmanship as well as because of the folk-lore and legend—often humorously treated—that they imply. Netsuké are a minor, but very amusing and thoroughly original form of Japanese sculpture.

There is a divine simplicity about the architecture of a Japanese home that is unlike anything elsewhere—and more restful; Shinto architecture is effective in its primitive and simple lines; Buddhist, which shows a great deal of Chinese influence, is more elaborate and grandiose, but has the beauty of these qualities. On such a subject Mr. Cram should be an undoubted authority, and if we put together certain detached sentences and paragraphs from his treatise we can gather the gist of what he has to say. The following passages are not quoted consecutively but are a composite taken from the first hundred pages of his book: "Carefully analyzed and faithfully studied, Japanese architecture is seen to be one of the great styles of the world, as it is one of the most perfect examples of steady development and ultimate decay — the whole lasting through twelve centuries — that is anywhere to be found. In one respect it is unique: it is a style developed from the exigencies of wooden construction, and here it stands alone as the most perfect mode in wood the world has known."

In an earlier part of this essay it was stated that soon after the introduction of Buddhism in 552, Ko-

rean architects were imported to build the first Buddhist temple—Horyuji, near Nara. In connection with this Mr. Cram writes: "Korean or Chinese architecture was, at the time of its advent in Japan, a style that was almost perfectly developed; in simplicity and directness of construction, in subtlety and rhythm of line, in dignity of massing, in perfection of proportion and in gravity and solemnity of composition, it shows all the evidences of a supreme civilization." A few pages later he turns to a discussion of Yakushiji where the black bronzes are: "Here we find a pagoda that is not only unique, but, as well, one of the most beautiful structures in Japan, and also the first undoubted work by a native architect. If the prototype of so revolutionary a structure existed in China we can never know, but as this triumph of imagination dates from the year 680, a full century after the coming of the Korean architects, and as it is full of characteristically Japanese features, we are, I think, justified in accrediting it to native genius. . . . This pagoda of Yakushiji is one of the most daring, original and yet successful works of architecture in Japan; nothing of the delicacy of line, frankness of construction, subtlety of proportion so characteristic of Horiuji is wanting, but in place of the severe and classic masses of the

Korean work is an aspiring lightness, a captivating grace that only finds a parallel in the medieval architecture of Europe. And yet this consummate achievement was the work of a people separated by hardly more than a century from practical barbarism. . . . The pagoda of Yakushiji marks the birth of national Japanese architecture; in it may be discovered the germs of its future development; loftiness and varied grace in place of the somber severity of the Chinese model, daring originality, richness and elaboration of detail." Later in a retrospective passage he writes: "Another quality that is most salient is the exceeding unity and perfection of composition either of single temples or of whole groups, either of the exterior or the interior. The whole thing is built up with the utmost subtlety of feeling and delicacy of appreciation until it forms a consistent and united whole. The mere measuring of some one of the older buildings reveals a subtlety of feeling for proportion that is amazing. Such measurements show at once that every curve and every line has been developed with the most astonishing care. Still another quality that could be studied to advantage is that of the extreme solemnity of the temple interiors. For impressiveness and deeply religious feeling, together with extreme splendour of colouring and wealth of detail,

they are almost unexcelled. The Gothic interiors of Europe have their own quality of awe-inspiring majesty which no other architecture has ever approached, but for effects of dusky splendour Byzantine and Japanese architecture stand together." The "dusky splendour" of which Mr. Cram speaks is to be found chiefly in buildings of the 17th Century; but in so brief an outline as this we must pass swiftly from the morning to the evening: — from the delicate springtime grace of Yakushiji to the decaying autumnal glory of Tokugawa times—the gold and crimson of Chion-in, the many-tinted and elaborate shrines at Nikko. "In every detail the early work has been coarsened and vulgarized; the ornament is cheap and tawdry. . . . In the presence of that bewildering piece of ornamentation, the shrine of Iyeyasu, one is apt to be blinded by its extravagance to the actual shortcomings of its architecture; the roofs are heavy and often coarse in their curves, the roof ridges and ribs have become enormous, crude, and meaningless, the bracketing is fantastic and irrational in its intricacy and has lost the last structural excuse. Above all, the following of the lines, the curve composition, is no longer inevitably good. In the work of the Nara and Kyoto periods one may view a building from any point, and by some magical power the

architect has so composed his curves that there is not a discord, a lack of rhythm anywhere. Under the Tokugawa this is no longer true, and one is constantly shocked at some violent discord in the composition of the line. . . . So far as the interiors are concerned, the results have been by no means so bad, for the Korean work was simple—almost forbidding; and it must be confessed that a temple interior, like that of Chion-in at Kyoto, leaves almost no loophole for criticism, while the inconceivable richness of Shiba and Nikko is yet in perfect taste. The riotousness that occurred in external work never happened to a like degree in the interior, and the plan and details remain simple and closely modeled on the early work. The greatest revolution was in decoration, and instead of the Korean woodwork covered with red oxide of lead, the white plaster and formal wall painting, came an apotheosis of colour. Certain temple interiors are a glory of burnished gold, columns, walls, and ceilings, with just enough black and red lacquer to give the required accent; in others, the black lacquer predominates, and the floors and columns are like polished ebony; in others every inch of the fabric is painted in brilliant yet delicate colours. Whatever the treatment, the effect is always splendid and imposing, sometimes, as at Chion-in, unspeakably sub-

lime, and matched, if matched at all, only by St. Mark's in Venice, or the Capella Palatina in Palermo. After the time of the Fujiwara (884–1186), Japanese architecture certainly degenerated steadily, but decoration advanced with equal rapidity until the opening of the ports by Commodore Perry started the final catastrophe that has involved both architecture and decoration, if nothing else, in final, if not irretrievable, ruin."

Mr. Cram is the only famous Western architect who has written of Japan, and in so technical and difficult a subject it seemed better to listen to the specialist rather than to have a layman endeavor to give his own less definite views. With the main statements the writer of this essay agrees, though he might not have expressed himself quite so strongly either in praise or blame. He does wish, however, at the close of this section to turn the thoughts of the reader back from the glories of Buddhist architecture to the divine simplicity of the Japanese home.

## Literature

The literary art has been practiced from early times in Japan, the favorite form of expression being poetry. This poetry nearly always was written in Japanese, that is to say the Chinese ideographs which are the basis of the Japanese *written* language were understood and pronounced in accordance with the Japanese sounds and meanings they had been adopted to express, and never as they would have been in any part of China. The same ideographs in unabbreviated forms were given the Chinese meaning and pronunciation in works of scholarship, Chinese being the language of learning as Latin was with us. In poetry even Chinese abstract words that had been introduced into the Japanese language were excluded.

Japanese poems are minute things; the epigrams of the Greek Anthology are more nearly like them than anything else known to us. With few exceptions they are limited to seventeen or thirty-one syllables which have to be arranged in a special way, and frequently there is a break in the sense at a certain place that is like the change in thought between the octave and the sestet of a Petrarchan sonnet. Japanese poems do not describe, they suggest; the poet strives merely

to release or stimulate and then to direct the imagination of his reader, trusting the latter to make the poem for himself. The more sensitiveness, the more experience of life and accumulated knowledge the reader has, the more he gets out of the poem; and it is a sufficient comment on the imaginative quality, the responsiveness to beauty and the intellectual astuteness of the Japanese, to say that poetry of this type appears to have been more popular—more generally appreciated—in Japan than any poetry has been in any other nation, except perhaps that of Homer in Greece. Technically these seventeen or thirty-one syllable poems, with their lack of rhyme, comparative lack of accent and perfect equivalence of syllables, are wholly distinctive, and it is not unlikely that they were being composed and spoken by the Japanese even before the introduction of ideographs made it possible to record them. At any rate, the first great anthology was compiled in the 8th Century of poems well known then and popular even today. The fault of this kind of poetry is that within its narrow limits it is likely to lose spontaneity and become highly artificial—a merely clever playing with words; at its best it is very good, but in an essay such as this where a dissertation on poetry would be out of place, it is better to give one or two examples

than to write a detailed criticism or appreciation. Before doing so, however, it might be well to add that the knowledge and love of poetry are strong in the Japanese of today — a fact that was illustrated recently in the smoking room of a business-men's club in New York, when the name of Basho—a 17th Century poet — came into the conversation and a prominent leader of industry in the new "commercialized" Japan closed his eyes and talked poetry until the crowded, noisy room had been emptied of all save the exile and his host. For one it was like walking again in the gardens of childhood, for the other there was a lesson that need not be disclosed. Behind the reticence and self-suppression of almost any Japanese there is an artist — one sensitive to beauty in its many forms and a lover of it.

Sometimes the little poems express a complete idea, as in the following thirty-one syllable piece which is in a still popular 13th Century Anthology and was written by a courtly poet of three hundred years earlier:

Before I found you
Slowly the seasons passed me,
Life had no meaning:
Now would a thousand ages
Be all too brief for loving.

Sometimes they are like sighs of regret or exclamations of joy, as in a seventeen-syllable poem which appears on a print by Hiroshige showing a flight of wild geese across the moon, and probably is by some 19th Century contemporary of the artist:

Never has night-time
Been more perfect in beauty:
Geese and the moonlight!

In another the presence of birds in flight is merely implied:

Frail are the petals—
So frail I fear lest they fall
In the wind of wings.

A prose rendering by Lafcadio Hearn of another nature poem has become famous:

"Old pond; frogs jumping in; sound of water."

Wordsworth would have expanded this into a couple of pages of description, but that is what the Japanese reader is expected to do for himself. The poet opens a door through which the imagination of the reader passes to realize first the season of the year and general aspect of the scene; then, according to his own store of accumulated experience and of memories,

to fill in the details—the mossgrown stone lanterns about the margin, the overhanging pines, the carp, the lotus leaves; and so, if he will, to create from his own imagination a picture of the life that has passed beside that old pond where once there were hopeful children and lovers, where the tragi-comedies of successive generations were played to the closing of the curtain and where now the silence is broken only by the sound of water, the frogs jumping in among the dark green leaves as the breeze of dawn ruffles the surface and mist rises, or in the twilight. You can make the poem what you will, but the poetic reaction—the release of art—has come to you; the poet has accomplished his purpose and you have shared in the creative act; for, after all, in the Occident as in the Orient, it takes two to make a poem and creation in the soul of the artist is fulfilled only in its response. Until the note he strikes stirs answering overtones in us, the end of art is unachieved.

The occasional difficulty of understanding and translating such poems has been described by me in the Catalogue of Japanese Prints exhibited at the Grolier Club of New York in 1923 and 1924, and quotation from the passage can conclude what need be said about poetry here. The print under discussion (Vol. II, No. 62) is by Hiroshige and represents a

bird of the variety named in Japan *Uguisu* perched on a branch covered with blossoms. At the side is a poem. The comment of the catalogue is as follows:

In Japan the Uguisu has "the sweetest voice of all God's creatures." Occidentals, in compliment to its melodiousness, call it the nightingale, but mistakenly from the scientific point of view, for the two birds are quite different and the Uguisu sings only in the daytime. The word nightingale, however, has overtones for our ears and will be used in the rendering of the poem, for the problem of the translator is to convey the feeling of the original; and if, on the doubtful chance of pleasing some ornithologist, he were to call the bird by what appears to be its name, *Cettia Cantans*, his little poem—the fruit of much loving and patient labor—would be spoiled. . . . The seventeen syllables of the original, arranged in three unrhymed lines of five, seven and five syllables each, mean literally:

O Uguisu (Cettia Cantans)—taxes—two shō, five gō (a measure of capacity approximately equivalent to four quarts).

This does not appear at first to make much more sense than it does poetry, but what would a Japanese reader find in it? He would know that taxes were

paid in rice, that the very poorest of peasants would only be required to pay an annual tax of about the amount mentioned, and he would visualize and feel the bitter life-long struggle of the poor; getting from the poem a meaning which may be rendered in the original form:

O Nightingale! Sing
Even to the poor who pay
The humblest tribute.

This gives the meaning, but to get the feeling in English it is necessary, sometimes, to expand a translation and use the Japanese thirty-one syllable form in which the poem on this print might be rendered more adequately:

Yea, for the poorest
Whose barren field can barely
Cover the taxes;
Even for his enjoyment
Nightingales pour forth music.

If the poetically-minded reader of this version will turn back to the literal, word-for-word, translation given above, he will see that a number of other ideas, equally poetic, are latent in it. A translation could be made, for example, which would contrast the beauty

of the singing bird with the sorrow and sordidness of life. The Japanese poet merely sets free the imagination, as Heredia sets it free occasionally by the final line of a sonnet; but after all, the little poem in question has been selected for discussion just because it is an extreme example, much more difficult than most.

Another variety of literature that has been popular in Japan is the novel, with which may be grouped the romances that deal with the lives of half-historical, half-legendary heroes of the mediaeval wars—a class of books that is akin to European romances of chivalry. Familiarity with such of these as have been translated is very helpful toward a just appreciation of Japanese character, and is essential to an understanding of the theatre where episodes in the lives of their heroes are portrayed year after year before vastly appreciative audiences who have the same preknowledge of the stories that Athenian audiences had of the tales of Troy and Thebes. These romances are works of art only in the same sense as the *Morte d'Arthur* or *Amadis of Gaul;* but occasionally embedded in them are episodes complete in themselves that are superbly dramatic and profoundly moving. Such, for example, is the tale of the two young dancing girls, Hotoke and Gio, which forms the sixth

chapter of the *Heike Monogatari* and is one of the most perfect short stories in literature, appealing strongly to the reader through its simplicity and pathos, as well as in the dramatic contrast between the flower-like quality of the young girls and the fate that befell them.

Of Japanese novels, the finest by universal acclaim is the *Tales of Genji* which is now being made accessible to English readers in an excellent translation by Mr. Arthur Waley of the British Museum. This book is delightful reading and is earnestly commended to members of the Japan Society who wish to form an idea of the culture and quaint loveliness of Japan in one of its most exquisite eras. In the Fujiwara period, a considerable portion of the literature was produced by women, and the authoress of this novel, Murasaki Shikibu, was a lady in waiting at the Court during the first years of the 11th Century. The hero, Prince Genji, is depicted as a very brilliant young noble of a preceding age whose charm and whose exploits — amorous and otherwise — had become legendary even during his lifetime. The diary of this same authoress has recently been published in English with those of some of her contemporaries, in a volume that is also well worth reading. Diaries, it may be added, were one of the favorite

forms of literary expression during the period in which she lived. The *Genji Monogatari* has continued to be loved and read for 900 years, and is an undeniably great book as well as a very entertaining one. There are few things in all literature that bring the life of remote times and places so clearly and so delightfully before the reader, and few that show so well the universal heritage of human nature. The *Tales of Genji* are as fresh today as when they were written. The different parts can be read separately, and certain chapters in the third, *A Wreath of Cloud*, which thus far is the latest to appear in translation, are particularly enchanting.

Of the later novelists, the most popular was Bakin (1767–1848), who wrote for and of the people rather than the court, and was fortunate in having Hokusai for his contemporary illustrator. If so enormously prolific a writer may be judged by a single brief novelette, Bakin was a rollicking sort of storyteller with a fertile invention and a keen sense of the ridiculous, somewhat like Dumas and somewhat more like Scarron, Smollett or LeSage.

Literature in Japan, with a few notable exceptions such as the *Tales of Genji*, does not seem to the outsider to have reached the heights attained in several Occidental nations, nor does it bulk as large. It lacks

classical form, has the Oriental vice of discursiveness. The best of it, however, is a very important contribution to universal literature, and now that the *Tales of Genji* are being translated, Murasaki Shikibu is likely to be ranked in the literary consciousness of the West among the great novelists of the world.

## The Theatre

One of the most highly developed and successful of Japanese arts is that of the theatre. In acting and costuming, in subtlety of dramatic expression, and power of emotional appeal, it is one of the great theatres, but more than any of the other arts of Japan, it requires a prolonged stay in the country of its home, a mental adaptation to its conventions. There is nothing remotely approaching it in China, where the art of the theatre has remained about where the English Drama was before the coming of the Elizabethans. This applies chiefly to the popular theatre—Kabuki—which grew out of the still surviving Marionette theatre and is only about three hundred years old. Before it came the Nō which must be described and briefly considered first.

The Nō are religious, or at least solemn and serious dramas, inculcating Buddhist morals. They are played in skillfully carved masks suitable to the characters portrayed, and are chanted or intoned to a particular kind of musical accompaniment, descriptive and explanatory passages being sung by some of the musicians, who thus fulfill one of the functions of the Greek chorus. Dancing, however, is left entirely to the protagonists who move masked, and gorgeously

robed in sweeping garments, from the beginning to the end of the piece, through a series of stately posturings. Each movement is prescribed by tradition. The plays never have more than one or two acts and seldom more than three or four characters. The texts are written mainly in verse and are filled with obscure, scholarly allusions which make them extremely difficult to understand in their details, though the main outline of the story—simple and solemn—is easy to comprehend. This was, and to a lesser extent still is, the theatre of the aristocrats; it is highly conventionalized, intellectual, didactic; the quality of its emotional appeal may be vaguely compared with that of the Good Friday part of Parsifal. It is caviar to the general, the cult of the elect, and is attended in the spirit with which one goes to a solemn service or to hear—let us say—the Ninth Symphony. The finest Nō were written in the 14th and 15th Centuries. Between them are performed, by way of comic relief, short farces—Kyōgen—which ridicule everything in heaven and earth, even the subjects, the solemnity, the poetic language and the moralizing of the Nō. These display the humorous aspects of the servant problem, of marital relations, the iniquities of priests. They are essentially ludicrous. It is customary to give five Nō and three Kyōgen in a performance that lasts about

as long as an uncut Goetterdaemmerung, but has frequent intermissions for tea and conversation.

The popular theatre is a very different affair. Its themes sometimes are the same—the fall of greatness, the struggle between passion and duty; but these are treated romantically, with less attention to the moral and very much more to the picturesque and dramatic elements of the story. In the plays of the popular theatre—even the most tragic—humor is woven into the piece itself. No comic interludes are needed, no masks are worn, the occasional music is different, the dancing when it comes, is of another type. All the parts are taken by men as they were on Shakespeare's stage and in Athens; the actors enter by a path through and slightly above the audience—a device made known to the Occident by Herr Reinhardt; the posturing in the dancing portions of plays in which dancing occurs has conventions derived from the movements of Marionettes. The plays themselves, whether written originally for the Marionette theatre in which amazing skill has been attained, or directly for the Kabuki, deal chiefly with episodes from legend or history and turn, quite frequently, on the devotion of a retainer to his lord—loyalty being the leading motive of the Japanese theatre, as sex is in the theatre of the Occident. Those

plays in which love in the sense of sexual passion is the chief theme usually have to do with the sowing of wild oats by the young, and have for dramatic conflict the struggle between the desire for self-gratification and that innate sense of loyalty to the family, the code of honor, which is so deep-seated and pervasive a force in Japanese character.

The training of an actor in Japan begins in his earliest childhood and is arduous in the extreme. Almost always his father or his father by adoption was an actor before him; his audience is intensely critical; he must learn to express every variety of emotion with an economy of means; he must be competent to hold a thousand spectators in tense expectancy with his back turned or through long stretches of silence. Every movement, every pose must be graceful and suited to the role. Each gesture must be expressive. In the spring of 1926 the present Ganjiro played two parts on the same day, one that of an elderly reprobate, the other a young lover. The skill of a Japanese actor in "make-up" is remarkable, but the lines of Ganjiro's motions in one play were totally different from those of the other. As the young lover he was all lithe curves, as graceful and instinct with youth as the slender weeping willow under which he stood at the end. As the elderly sinner he was more angu-

lar, less rhythmic, the flowing line was constantly being broken. It is not that this impressed the spectator as a triumph of conscious art; it seemed the natural and inevitable expression of the type and it made that type live completely before him.

It is a strong temptation to give a synopsis of one of the famous pieces; perhaps of Kanjincho, that one-act masterpiece which surely is among the most absorbing of all short plays; or of Terakoya—an episode from a long play that is deeply moving in its pathos, its tragic intensity and suspense; or of Chushingura, that tale of the loyal and masterless retainers who laid down their lives to re-establish the honor of their dead lord; but space forbids. In closing this section on the theatre it may be said, however, that Japanese plays would lose more greatly in production by foreign actors than the plays of any other theatre known to the writer. The tradition counts for too much, the ability to wear the clothes as they should be worn, the instinctive and hereditary knowledge of how the character portrayed would feel and act.

## Metal Work

Perhaps the most thoroughly distinctive and certainly one of the most brilliantly successful of the Japanese minor arts is that of the metal worker, by which is meant chiefly the production of swords and sword ornaments. On the Asian continent there has been nothing resembling the sword ornaments of the Japanese, and the swords themselves are superior even to the famous blades of Damascus and Toledo. The sword was the most dearly prized possession of every Japanese above the peasant, it was the sacred symbol of his loyalty to that code of honor of which mention has been made; and when not in actual use it was handled with reverence—no breath, for example, being allowed to sully the gleam of its purity. To breathe on a sword or a beautiful piece of lacquer is a grossness that no Japanese would commit, and it is difficult for the Occidental to realize the spirit of religious devotion in which works of art always have been approached both by their makers and their owners in that land where the soul of a people has expressed itself more completely through beauty than in conquest or scholarship or commerce. For a thousand years the makers of swords performed ceremonies of purification before undertaking their work,

as even now Taikwan, the leading painter of present-day Tokyo, is undergoing a period of abstention and religious meditation in order to fit himself as best he may to execute a series of paintings for one of the Imperial Palaces. The artist must be spiritually pure, his soul as free as possible from impermanent alloy. It is one of the peculiar distinctions of the Japanese that side by side with all this there is an unfailing kindliness, a humorous appreciation of things as they are, a devotion of almost equal intensity to the mere visible beauty of the world. Swords were made reverently, religiously; they were the sacred symbols of knighthood and of loyalty. The makers of guards and sword ornaments were equally perfect craftsmen, but men who revelled in folk-lore and legend, in delicate appreciation of nature, half whimsical presentations of life. These guards and knife handles and small ornaments are marvels of workmanship and have in them that beauty of spacing and design which is a distinctive gift of the Japanese. With netsuké and inrō, however, they are largely responsible for a false impression among the ignorant that the genius of Japan has expressed itself only in works of extraordinary delicacy and charm but not of greatness. If a Japanese knew only of the art of the West through Tanagra figurines and the work of Floren-

tine gold smiths, Greece and the Italian Renaissance would be similarly misjudged. The Occident is less familiar with the major than with the minor arts of Japan.

Once again, a catalogue of names and schools and periods must be avoided, though it should be said that the art of the swordsmith had reached its climax by the year 1500, while it was during the two following centuries that the finest guards of the earlier type, mainly of iron, were made. From the close of the 17th until the latter part of the 19th Century when the wearing of treasured swords was given up in universal obedience to Imperial decree, there was peace, and during that period when swords were used less for fighting than as signs of class distinction, the guards, knife handles, etc., were made of softer metal and came to be more and more elaborate, often inlaid and decorated to an extent not practiced before. Genuine guards by the early masters are excessively rare, but are to be found in the hereditary collections of the old nobility and elsewhere.

It is through the unfailing kindness and patience of the owners of great private collections of paintings, lacquer, metal work, etc., Prince and Count Tokugawa, Marquis Mayeda (among whose sword ornaments are those used by the great general Nobunaga),

Marquis Hosokawa, Marquis Kuroda, Baron Kawasaki, Baron Nakashima, Dr. Dan, Mr. Hara, Mr. Nezu and others, as well as of Museum Directors, that the writer of these pages has been enabled to gather some idea of the splendor and distinctiveness of Japan's contributions to the store of beauty in the world.

THE first European collectors of lacquer were Madame de Pompadour and Marie Antoinette, neither of whom appears to have acquired anything very good; the probable reason being that the Japanese never willingly export the things they value themselves. It is only recently that private collectors and museums in the Occident have begun to realize that to get a really fine thing they must pay for it against very active competition from the Japanese, who would even be given an extra stimulus by the danger of having something worth keeping in Japan go out of the country. That is why most Occidental collections — except of prints which the Japanese connoisseurs once scorned to collect—are filled with a quantity of objects that are not of the very first rank and are deficient in those that are. It was only during a very brief period of spiritual and economic crisis that good things were sacrificed, for the Japanese are born collectors and works of art have ever been their dearest possessions. The Japanese reverence for art and passion for collecting account for the presence in Japan of a large proportion of the best preserved and best authenticated Chinese paintings in existence, the great collections of these having been

commenced several hundred years ago. But let us return to lacquer.

The tree from which the lacquer sap exudes grows particularly well in Japan, and although the process of lacquering appears to have been introduced from China, most critics agree that the Japanese eventually surpassed the continental artists. Japanese lacquer of the best periods certainly is finer in quality, and the characteristics that mark it as distinctively Japanese are those that have made it particularly loved. The little medicine cases (inrō) to which netsuké were attached, are triumphs of technical achievement and, in their own way, triumphs of art as well—exquisite in refinement of color and design, and in their subtle suggestions of nature and of life. The earliest Japanese lacquer that has survived dates from about the 7th Century, but the greatest masters in the medium lived between the close of the 16th and the close of the 19th Centuries, Zeshin having died in 1891. In Japan, the mirror-black variety is the most prized, and this may be decorated with gold powder, mother-of-pearl, tin, pewter or a number of other materials. Koyetsu, Korin—whose work in painting has been mentioned—and Ritsuo, who was also a painter, are among the most famous workers in lacquer. Today a fine and well-authenti-

cated piece by one of these men would bring a fabulous price in Japan. Some are in museums, some belong to the Imperial household, and some are among the most dearly prized possessions of private collectors. A volume could be written on the different schools and masters, the many varieties of lacquer, the peculiarities of artists and periods, but here there is only space to say that the process, even in its simplest forms, is slow and laborious in the extreme, a fine piece taking months or even years of skilled and loving labor. The best lacquer is impossible to produce under commercial conditions. In the old days artists worked for feudal lords or individual rich patrons who cared only for quality; quantity counted not at all and the time consumed by the artist was a matter of very small moment so long as the finished work was perfect. Japanese lacquer, in black or gold, whether decorated with a design in the same color and material or otherwise, never has been surpassed in technical perfection and, in its lesser sphere, is one of Japan's most satisfying gifts of beauty to the world.

## Ceramics

The first products of Japanese art to be seen in Europe in large quantities were the porcelains brought by Dutch traders from Nagasaki, and frequently made to order for export. The influence of these is evident in Delft, Worcester, Chelsea, Derby and other Occidental wares. The varieties usually exported—Imari, recent Satsuma of a somewhat spurious variety, and others, are apt to be overdecorated or trivial and show little of the refinement and sobriety that are characteristic of Japanese taste. Old Imari is much finer than new, but in any case the porcelain of Japan requires little consideration here, for this art was learned later and never has developed as others did to become nationally distinctive and triumphant. Some Japanese porcelains —Hirado, Nabeshima, the best Imari—are exceedingly good, but they show how successfully the Japanese can adapt from the Chinese when they do not make an art their own.

With pottery it is different. Here the continental influence came very early, from Korea rather than from China, and Japanese pottery developed racial characteristics until much of it became thoroughly distinctive and possessed of a charm all its own. Cer-

tain types remained direct copies of Chinese varieties, others did not; but in neither case does Japanese pottery quite equal in form and quality its continental antecedents. Where it does excel is in a friendly way of allowing the personality of the maker to appear in his work. In distinctively Japanese pottery one feels the individuality of the potter, a bond of communion is established and dead clay seems warm with life. Pottery is admired for the abstract beauties of form and glaze; it is held dear because of something else. When Japanese pottery is decorated, as in the work of Kenzan and his followers, the distinguishing qualities of design, the type of beauty that marks Japanese work, become immediately apparent even to the most unobserving.

We have excellent authority for the statement that God and Mammon cannot be served at the same time, and the old Japanese potters did not serve Mammon; they made their wares—tea-bowls, tea-jars, incense burners, flower-vases—to be used in the tea ceremony and elsewhere by masters of the aesthetic who would value them for their restrained distinction and would appreciate to the full evidences of skillful devotion on the part of the craftsmen. At the present time, certain pieces of pottery made by famous potters of old, and known to have been used by masters of the

tea ceremony, sometimes bring fifty thousand dollars each in Japan — as much as an equally important piece of lacquer; and if this fact has more to do with Mammon than with aesthetics, it serves at least to show why such pieces do not commonly find their way into those undiscriminating and omnivorous receptacles, the suit-cases and reticules of tourists. Such values are largely fictitious and are mainly due to the historical associations of the objects; mention of them will indicate, however, that the finest, most dearly prized specimens are to be found in the private collections of Japan. An entrancing small bird by Kenzan is one of the cherished possessions of Dr. Makita of Tokyo and all the great collectors have important examples. Fortunately for us, as comprehensive a collection as exists is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and another of the leading public collections may be seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It is the desire of the Japan Society that this essay should not be overloaded with unfamiliar words and names of artists, should not be in any sense technical, and therefore no catalogue will be given of the different kinds of pottery, as none was attempted of the many varieties of lacquer; there will be no description of the work of different masters. One who commences to love pot-

tery will learn quickly to distinguish the characteristics of different makes, the salient traits of design and craftsmanship in the work of the leading artists —to tell a Raku, for example, from a Ninsei; it will be much longer before he even thinks he can distinguish a genuine piece from one of the preternaturally clever imitations of the work of any master.

The way of the expert in the old art of the Occident is safe and simple as compared with that dark path through the forest of illusion that must be followed by his Oriental brother; and where the innocent Westerner, without hereditary instinct for it, tries to take that doubtful way, he is likely to hear the voices of Inari mocking him in the darkness. Where a collection has been in the same family since before the discovery of America and each successive head of the house has added important works of his own time as well as more antiques, the present owner is likely to have an instinctive basis for comparative judgment that is totally lacking in one who merely has given some portion of his own life to the study.

## The Other Arts

Of the other arts—those that are of less importance in themselves and those that have been developed to less notable extents by the Japanese—space forbids more than passing mention.

Music is based on a scale that is different from our own and the Japanese make use of smaller intervals than our ears are trained to distinguish. It has remained simple, not complex, and when it is not the solemn intoning of the Buddhist ritual, or used as an accompaniment at the theatre to convey or emphasize the mood of the play, music generally is confined to pieces for the flute or for those string instruments of Japan, the koto, samisen and biwa, or to compositions in which some one of these is used to accompany ballad-singing. It is odd that music has remained comparatively stationary, for everyone sings—the children at their games, a queer little lilting melody, the fishermen in the boats, the geisha. At night, from behind the closed doors in the quiet streets comes the sound of the twanging strings universally played, and mingling sometimes with the deep tones of the great Temple bells floating down from the hills as a thought of eternity will come, solemn and deep, amid Life's gaieties and touch us

with a quiet hand. Music is the most difficult of all the arts, except that of calligraphy, for a foreigner to estimate properly, and the writer has set down these words with considerable hesitation. To the more subtly trained and more accustomed ears of the Japanese there are definite distinctions between the different varieties, and there are laws at least as exacting as our own. If the reader wishes to know something about the refinements of Japanese music, let him turn to a delightful description of an impromptu concert organized by Prince Genji, which may be found in *The Wreath of Cloud*.

It would be pleasant to write of the arts of dancing, landscape gardening, flower arrangement and the tea ceremony with their symbolism, and other pages could be devoted to those superb old fabrics of Japan—the Nō robes and priest robes that in their kind are supreme achievements, marvels of color and design and marvels as well in the technical perfection of their weaving. Many of these fabrics may be seen in a store room of the Boston Museum and others are on view at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. They cannot be described here; for art in Japan is not dead but living—a powerful force in the land today—and the closing lines of this brief resumé of the ways in which the soul of Japan has expressed

itself through beauty in the past, must be devoted to the present and the future.

Once when the late Mr. Okakura, who was an artist, was being afflicted with the question of what he thought about the "yellow peril," he replied that he had been given more opportunity to observe the "white disaster." When Western commercialism and competition were forced on Japan, it seemed a disaster for her art, for her perception and expression of beauty. Art cannot be standardized or made commercial; but Japan is intensely alive now, perhaps more intensely alive than ever before, and as long as Japan lives her sense of beauty — her creative imagination — will live with her — a fundamental part of her race soul. Ages ago she absorbed Chinese civilization, assimilated and developed what was best in it, and finally discarded, altered or ridiculed the rest. Will she not do the same with what we have brought to her? Shall we not do the same with what she has brought to us? Whistler and Manet knew to take what would make them richer, and leave the rest; perhaps under the leadership of Seiho Takeuchi—a notable painter of today who works with almost equal distinction in the European manner, Japanese art may gain from the West some new element that will enrich without destroying the beautiful old tradi-

tion, giving fresh impetus to it. Conditions of living and of patronage are totally different from what they were, and great creative periods, such as that of Athens at the time of Pericles, the Italian Renaissance, or the age of Elizabeth, are in a sense the flowering of racial consciousness as the result of special social conditions; but while a plant lives it will put forth new flowers and in Japan the plum blossoms still come on the old tree.

No one can feel more keenly than the writer the inadequacy of these words, but if they should lead some few to look at such greater works of Japanese art as they may have opportunity to see, and in the way that they are looked at in Japan, quietly and long enough to take definitely in what they have to give, at least one purpose will have been accomplished. It is hoped, however, that through this essay American members of the Society may come to feel more intimately acquainted with those polite business men of the modern world whom Japan sends to us and whose external qualities alone are familiar to most. No one can know a reticent man or a proud nation without catching glimpses of what is behind the veil; and the soul of Japan is in her art.

# A Brief Bibliography

The following list gives the names of books mentioned in the text with a special selection of others that might be helpful to the student. It must be remembered that the scholarship of the subject is constantly being revised, so that certain opinions and attributions given in older books may no longer be considered accurate. No one of the books published only in Japanese is included, nor is mention made of monographs on the work of single artists.

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*The Flight of the Dragon* (Wisdom of the East Series), London and New York, 1911.
This little book gives a very clear exposition of the principles of Far Eastern Art.

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This book discusses sculpture as well as painting. It is very readable and of the utmost importance, though much of its scholarship is out of date.

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C. VIGNIER AND H. INADA — *Estampes Japonaises Exposées au Musée des Arts Decoratifs*, Paris, 1909–1914. The six large volumes of this catalogue contain very little text, but many hundred illustrations. Some of the volumes are extremely scarce, but all are in the library of the Metropolitan Museum and some in the New York Public Library.

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*A Book Illustration by Nitchosai*, 1850

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